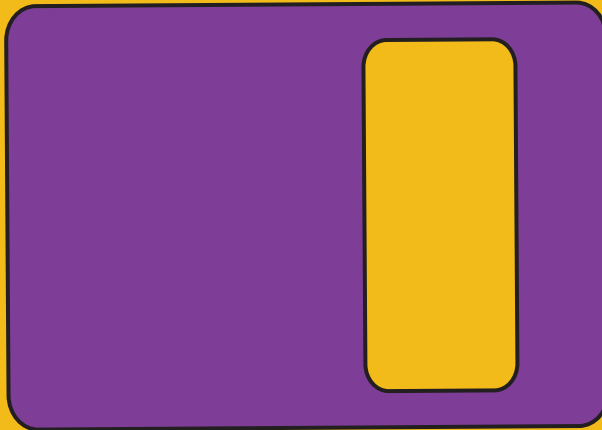# FAU LAC

Towards the construction of a
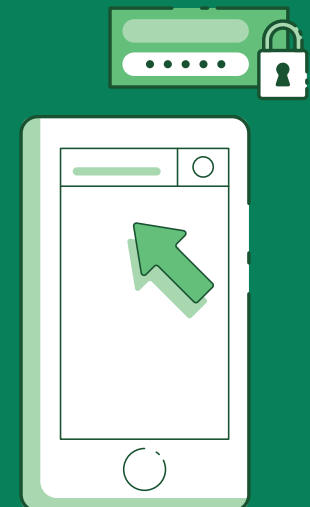
Feminist Digital Infrastructure

In the midst of a reality where life increasingly takes place between technologies and digital environments, in UAF-LAC we have facilitated reflections on the emotional and physical impacts of the use of technology on the lives of activists and human rights defenders. Through these spaces, we understand and enunciate from our actions that we construct a 'digital body' interconnected with the different bodies we inhabit. These bodies are stages of resistance and protection, for that reason we consider it vital to begin to name and describe it.

This holistic view of interconnected bodies led us to question ourselves, on the one hand, about the resources needed for digital technologies to work and reach our territories, and on the other hand, how we become co-responsible for the use of these technologies, so that we are less vulnerable online, at the same time that technology enhances our activisms'.

In 2018, the team at UAF-LAC began to transition towards working online, which involved further expanding our understanding of how to maintain care at the center from a distance, through virtual channels of communication. The approach to technology for each person on the team is different, and is related to multiple factors: from their contexts, identities, and age range to learning processes.

Therefore, by the time the COVID-19 pandemic began, we had already been working online for some time, which enabled us to share some **"Tips for Digital Care"** to communicate better and feel closer through digital media with those who had to migrate to these platforms to continue studying, working and/or practicing their activism.

These tips are based on our experience as a team. They are strategies that we developed to avoid being overwhelmed by the rhythms, types and amount of information that we share on public and private channels. They also protect information and build safe spaces, both for those of us who are part of the team, as well as for the people we accompany.

Furthermore, our reflections always brought us face to face with dialogues that we should continue to deepen, and that have to do with the barriers to access that exist in the digital world. Not all activists have the same knowledge about how to use the infinity of tools, applications and digital programs that exist, nor do they have the same economic possibilities to have their own equipment or infrastructure. Much of access is also shaped by the connectivity available in territories[2].

Our transition to online work has been long, slow, and full of learning. Today we are a team of
more than 25 people located in 8 countries in Latin America; in each of our territories the digital environment is different and particular.

2- Find the Tips for Digital Care
https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/5765/1ing_tips_de_cuidado_digital.pdf

OTHER POSSIBLE TECHNOLOGIES

www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co

We are a Fund that provides grants to respond to crises; in 2024 we processed an average of 64 applications for Rapid Response Grants (RRGs) each month, of which we accepted around 53 percent. In addition, we give out Strategic Grants for the defense of territories in calls for proposals that we open each year.

We are aware that the information organizations, collectives and alliances provide us with when they apply for a Grant, may involve a risk for them, as it contains personal, confidential information and they are opening the door for us to learn about their strategies. For this reason, we have an online application platform that allows us to process applications and have secure communication with movements and organizations.

Our SIGUEME, is UAF-LAC's own platform, with high security standards for data transfer, storage and consultation. Its creation was a process that we imagined as a collective, and was conceived to be intuitive, usable and accessible to people with disabilities and diverse capacities. We started to use it in 2016. All of the needs we identified through open and constant conversations with the feminist movements that we accompanied up to that point.

The data found on this platform are also systematized and organized, which enables us to read the trends of crisis or opportunity that our region faces.

We understand that the organizations that come to UAF-LAC often require our support to access 'Sígueme.' That's why we have direct contact channels through Telegram, Whatsapp and Signal, to adjust to different capacities, although we always seek to make our communications more secure and careful.

As part of strengthening the organization, after a process of training and accompaniment on digital care, we decided to carry out our daily communications through Signal: an end-to-end encrypted messaging application which requires much less metadata than other organizational communication applications. This process also led us to start building our own autonomous and secure digital infrastructure. Both the intranet, which allows us to work collaboratively online and manage internal information, and UAF-LAC's e-mail service are housed on our own dedicated servers and maintained by our team. We never share sensitive information through messaging applications, much less if they are not encrypted by default.

We know that this is a risky bet, due to the multiple vulnerabilities that can be detected every day, but also because the security of these systems -critical for our work- depends on their proper use by each of the people who are part of the team.

We continue to consolidate a line of work in technology and digital care, from which we coordinate the administration, maintenance and updating of systems, as well as the training and support to the human team, to take care regarding access and how we handle information internally and externally.

In a context of accelerated change, like that of the Internet and digital environments, our commitment cannot be static. We know that sustaining a feminist digital infrastructure requires time to adapt and flexibility for change. We recognize that it is difficult to compete with the immediacy and ease with which commercial systems are promoted, but the data we exchange and host are not bargaining chips, but the experiences of resistance and protection of the people and organizations we support.

Whenever possible, we opt for open-source technologies, end-to-end encryption, accessibility, usability and localization of tools, as well as secure passwords, preferably with two-step authentication.

The bet that we are cultivating in the digital domain consists of taking care of information through transparency in how we do it; that is to say, with which tools, and co-responsibility in the way in which we use them.

Our position is political, recognizing our digital body and understanding it in its complexity and interrelation. All of this implies time and dedication, but it allows us to continue realizing one of our work principles:

the political ethics of putting care at the center.

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